



Aug 28, 2003

Coronet Told To Halt Wastewater Dumping

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PLANT CITY - Citing the ``imminent threat" of a catastrophic spill, the state ordered Coronet Industries to stop discharging additional wastewater into its holding ponds immediately.

The order Wednesday from the Department of Environmental Protection presents operational challenges for Coronet, which uses water in its phosphate processing plant. Coronet recycles 90 percent of its processing water, but the order halts wastewater discharges that would add to the holding ponds.

David Weinstein, a Tampa attorney for Coronet, said the plant was operating late Wednesday, but he wasn't sure how it would comply with the order in the short term.

Coronet's holding ponds are brimming because of rain, including 7 inches that fell recently, Weinstein said. The company had a crew working on one berm of concern as early as 5 a.m. Tuesday, he said.

By Sept. 5, the plant expects to have operational two pollution-control devices that will use reverse-osmosis to cleanse 700,000 gallons of wastewater a day, he said.

Coronet is cooperating with the state and informed regulators this week about its own concerns with the ponds, he said. The company is in agreement with the terms of Wednesday's order, although not necessarily with its strong wording, he said.

The department said the order was needed ``to protect human health and safety and to protect the environment from a catastrophic failure of pond berms on the site."

The phosphate processing plant recently discharged 30 million to 40 million gallons of treated wastewater and stormwater, but inspections this week showed Coronet needs to take swift action on its ponds, DEP spokeswoman Merritt Mitchell said.

The order urges Coronet to:

- * Take immediate steps to stabilize the berms at its holding ponds and to hire engineers for the project immediately.
- * Notify nearby residents if the plant releases wastewater from the site that doesn't meet permitted effluent limits.
- * Provide daily written and oral reports to DEP's Tampa office on progress it is making in stabilizing the berms.

This story can be found at: <http://news.tbo.com/news/MGAN50S8WJD.html>

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